

## *Election Day at a Kansas Manor*

Tracks and islands of skin  
fossiled Mertle's faee.

Thin as a wrinkled pouch,  
Helen feared to eat an olive  
lest people think her pregnant  
or experiencing a virgin birth.

Walt, a brief old man,  
a Texan who seemed to be  
made in Japan,  
had a nose that resembled  
a Volkswagon.  
With hair parted in the  
shape of a horseshoe and  
boots pointed like arrowheads,  
Walt often stalked, trapped and  
murdered cockroaches in corners.

Harry, a clean old man whose  
teeth must have been cooked  
in curry, taught at Rice  
where he collected retired  
books and crusaded against  
euphemisms. "They call us,"  
he told me, "senior citizens,  
golden agers, senior saints,  
silver threads. They never  
call us what we really are:  
'old ---- blank.'  
The censored word rhymes with 'parts'."

When I escorted to the polls that unique  
mosaic of human antique,  
they dangled on me like Christmas  
tree ornaments.

Gladyse, who in her day indulged  
and bulged, crawled before us turtle-like.  
Supporting the sculptured hairdo of  
a rodco queen, she chattered in  
a proper French style cascading her  
words through the nose:

“Mother died in San Francisco  
when the earth did the polka.”

Suhail Hanna